

REMARKS

Claims 1-29 are pending in this application. All of the pending claims are rejected.

Claims 1, 14-17 and 29 are currently amended. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by EP 1100013 (Maes). Maes describes a “conversational markup language” which translates “conversational gestures.” More particularly, content originally presented in one markup language is translated into a different markup language so that it can be presented on a different device, e.g., rendering a web page on a cell phone. Because of limitations associated with different devices and markup languages, the translation may change the way content is presented. The change in presentation appears to be the basis for the rejections of the independent claims. In the Response to Arguments at page 5 of the Office Action the examiner emphasizes the update and synchronization of modalities described at paragraph [0018] of Maes as being equivalent to either the recited synthesizer, update functions, or both. The “update” and “synchronization” of Maes appears to consist of (1) changing the presentation of a question and (2) relaying user input back to the source after changing its presentation. In other words, the question is modified, sent to a user, the user supplies a response, and the response is modified into a format that the source page can process. Setting aside the different context, the “update function” recited in the claims is distinct from the Maes system because the recited update function effectively changes the answer to one question based on the answer to a different question, e.g., if “location?” is “Boston” then “road condition?” is “poor.” At best Maes might change the presentation of the same question, e.g., from “male or female?” to “man or woman?” and then change the presentation of the user’s answer from “woman” to “female” so that the source can process the

answer. However, update functions are well known in the field of automated document production.

The pending claims are related to the sequence in which update functions are invoked by automated document generation systems. Typically, such systems generate a customized document such as a legal contract from a template based on answers submitted in response to a questionnaire form. For example, a user without legal expertise would input answers to simple questions, and those answers would be used to select particular clauses of legal significance to include in a contract for the user (and also clauses to exclude). This task is not as simple as it may initially seem because different questions can be related in the sense that the answer to one question may determine or change the possible answers to another question, or invalidate the other question entirely. For example, if the answer to the question “gender?” is “male,” then the answer to “title?” must be “Mr.” and the question “pregnant?” is invalid. Consequently, the system might update the value assigned to “title?” and disable the question “pregnant?” so as to avoid wasting the user’s time by asking either “title?” or “pregnant?” Update functions can be used to implement such relationships between the values assigned to questions. In more complex relationships the answer to one question may be related to multiple other questions, and those other questions may affect the related question differently. For example, a question “jurisdiction?” may be related to both “state of incorporation?” and “state of residence?” This can lead to a problem.

An invocation sequence problem arises when multiple questions differently affect one related question. For example, if “state of incorporation?” is Delaware, and “state of residence?” is Massachusetts, then a jurisdiction clause selected based on the question “jurisdiction?” may end up being selected for either Delaware or Massachusetts based on the order in which the

questions are answered.¹ This invention seeks to mitigate such unacceptably random results by determining the sequence in which to invoke update functions by identifying the trigger questions, and then using an activation network to select the invocation sequence for the update functions associated with those trigger questions. Note that any translation of a question for processing and presentation by a browser is an implementation detail. The steps which are clearly absent from the cited reference are identifying the trigger questions and then determining the invocation sequence for the update functions associated with those trigger questions.

The claims are currently amended to more clearly recite the context of the invention and plain meaning of certain terms. More particularly, the “elements” are now “questions,” and “the invocation sequence” is described as specifying the order in which the update functions are invoked. Also, the questionnaire form and template document are explicitly recited in the preambles of certain ones of the claims. The use of Maes as the foundation for the rejection appears to be based at least in part on a broad interpretation of the original terminology used in the claims. Rather than refer back to the more plain meaning and context described in the specification, the claims have been amended to make it clear that the invention is concerned with assignment of values to questions in an environment where the result is dependent upon the order in which update functions are invoked. It is suggested that the claims as currently amended clearly distinguishes the cited reference. It is respectfully suggested that the rejection be withdrawn and a new search be performed with emphasis on the field of automated document generation.

¹ More typically, each question is assigned a value based on its answer, and the order in which those values are applied to the template (invoked) after all of the questions have been asked and answered causes the difficulty rather than the order in which the questions are asked or answered. The order of answering is used to illustrate the problem because it conveys the same principle in more easily understandable terms, i.e., what would happen if update functions were invoked as questions were answered.

Should there remain unresolved issues that require adverse action, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner telephone Applicants' Attorney at the number listed below so that such issues may be resolved as expeditiously as possible.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Date

/Holmes W. Anderson/
Holmes Anderson, Reg. No. 37,272
Attorney/Agent for Applicant(s)
Anderson Gorecki & Manaras LLP
33 Nagog Park
Acton, MA 01720
(978) 264-4001

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